

By adopting small boats, the clear gain to the company would be 8833l. 6s. 8d. per annum, even provided they paid the expence of transfer; but I conceive this expence will ultimately fall on the freighter, or he must have an admirable alternative, much superior to land-carriage, if the two-pence per ton for transfer can prevent him sending his goods by the canal; and therefore, if the freighter or carrier pays the transfer, the 10,000l. per annum is a clear saving to the company.

This reduces a decision on the question of the adoption of small boats in various situations, to a very simple criterion. Let the interest of the saving made by adopting a small canal, instead of a large one, be compared with the expence of transferring cargoes: keeping this in view, that the expence of transfer will fall on the freighter or carrier, who can have no alternative to relieve him from this mode of conveyance; not even if a large canal ran to the same point. No large canal can rival a small one, for evident reasons. Suppose, for instance, a large and small canal running side by side, the large canal costing 300,000l. (*or, in proportion, three times the expence of the small one*), and the small one 100,000l. one penny per ton per mile, to the small canal, would be as good interest as three-pence to the larger work; consequently the small canal company could lower their tonnage, so as to favour the freighter, and render the expence of transfer of no consequence; they would even grow rich, by lowering the tonnage; which would draw the trade from the large canal, and leave it a stagnate and useless pool*.

* I do not hesitate to prognosticate the annihilation of lock-canal, by improved science; in like manner as improvement on machinery renders the old apparatus useless.

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The facility and cheapness of the small canal also invites and encourages connection from every quarter; but the difficulty of conducting large boats through a country precludes, or at least most materially limits, their extension.

Considering these circumstances, I conceive there are few situations which can warrant a canal for large boats; short cuts uniting the arms of rivers, or through a flat country to an adjoining town, where there is no great expence, and much to be gained, the latter may be advisable.

But, to view internal navigation on the broad scale of national improvement, I conceive the river navigations should be extended as far as convenient; but, the moment the course of the river is left to direct water conveyance towards the interior country, small boats should commence.

In the light of national improvement, the produce of labour is the real wealth of a country; the more the labour will produce, so much more the nation improves. As a man who improves a machine, from spinning one pound of cotton per day, to spin twenty; in the same time, and with the same labour, evidently obtains his comforts with greater ease. It is therefore worthy of remark, that, within little more than three years, the immense sum of 5,300,000l. has been subscribed, in order to pay the expence of constructing the various navigations which have been proposed within that time: this sum, averaged at 5000l. per mile, will execute 1060 miles; yet, to a certainty, 2120 miles might be formed on the small scale for the above sum, adequate, in every part, to the various kinds of trade, and thus give to the nation the advantage of 1060 miles additional water carriage, the benefits of which would certainly be immense.

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